



Montana Human Rights Network

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EXHIBIT 7
DATE 4-3-07
SB 498

SB 498 – House Appropriations Committee

Dear Committee Members,

The Montana Human Rights Network rises in strong support of SB 498. The Network is actively involved in education, organizing and policy work on the issue of economic justice, and has focused specifically on access to quality health care for all individuals and families.

In doing this work, we use the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights as our framework. The Universal Declaration ensures that all people have the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of themselves and their families. This is addressed in Article 25 and outlined within this article is the explicit right to medical care. It is to fulfill this promise that the Network urges a “do pass” on SB 498.

We recognize that people in our state are denied access to necessary medical care everyday. We believe that to treat the health of our neighbors as a commodity, something that is dolled out, not on the basis of a person’s need, but on the basis of that person’s ability to pay, is wrong. Necessary and adequate health care simply should not be treated as a commodity. President Bush spoke recently on the issue of health care. In his remarks he repeatedly used the word “consumer.” His choice of words is a symptom of a basic problem with our system. We do treat patients as consumers in our society. For example we know that over half of all bankruptcies are the result of inability to pay off medical debts, and over 13% of those involve medial debts incurred for a sick child. These parents did not file bankruptcy for lack of trying to pay their bills and live frugally. Before filing bankruptcy, 60% went without needed doctor or dentist visits, 43% did not fill prescriptions, 40% had lost their telephone service, 30% had a utility shut off, 19% went without food, and 15% took out second or third mortgages to pay for their medical expenses.

The Network believes that our health care system must be just and equitable regardless of a person’s income. The philosophy of the state on this basic right should be everyone in and no one left out.

The state of Montana has the ability to do better for its citizens. This bill can be a big part of Montana’s health care solution.

Again, we urge a “do pass” on SB 498.

Sincerely,

Kim Abbott
Organizer
Montana Human Rights Network